

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:AR DAY/MAR

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

NEA:ALATHERTONJR.

S/S-O: MTANNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 243490

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PFOR, PINS, LE, SY, US

SUBJECT: DIALOG WITH SYRIA ON LEBANESE SITUATION

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. WE HAVE BEEN HAVING HIGH LEVEL DELIBERATIONS HERE REGARDING LEBANESE SITUATION, AND WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SOME ARAB GOVERNMENTS AND WITH ISRAELIS. WE FEEL TIME HAS COME TO BEGIN DIALOG WITH SYRIANS IN VIEW OF THEIR DIRECT INTEREST IN LEBANESE PROBLEM AND OF ROLE THEY HAVE BEEN PLAYING WITH RESPECT TO IT.

2. WE WOULD WANT TO CORRECT IMPRESSION SYRIANS MAY WELL HAVE THAT WE SUPPORT HARD-LINE CHRISTIAN POSITION, WHILE AT SAME TIME MAKING CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT INDIFFERENT TO SITUATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON. THE US STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NATIONAL UNITY OF LEBANON. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE SEE AS DESIRABLE OUTCOME A SOLUTION FOR THE COUNTRY'S

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INTERNAL PROBLEMS THAT WOULD BE STABLE AND FAIR BUT NOT

NECESSARILY BASED ON EXISTING DIVISION OF POWER AMONG THE COMMUNITIES MAKING UP LEBANESE POPULATION. WE BELIEVE, IN FACT, THAT SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD LIKELY HAVE TO INVOLVE SOME SHIFT IN PRESENT DIVISION OF POWER, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT INVOLVING OURSELVES IN THAT QUESTION. WE WOULD NOT WISH TO SEE SUCH A NEW ARRANGEMENT UNDERMINE SECURITY FOR BASIC RIGHTS OF CHRISTIANS SINCE THIS WOULD BE ONE KEY PRE-REQUISITE FOR ANY SOLUTION THAT WAS TO BE STABLE, I.E., ACCEPTABLE TO MODERATE CHRISTIANS.

3. WE THINK SYRIAN VIEWS ARE LIKELY TO BE CLOSE TO OURS ON MAJOR ELEMENTS OF DESIRABLE OUTCOME IN LEBANON. IF SO, WE HAVE IMPORTANT COMMON GROUND. WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR HOW THEY SEE THE SITUATION DEVELOPING, WHAT THEIR OWN PLANNING MAY BE, AND WHAT THEY CONSIDER WE MIGHT USEFULLY DO. IN LATTER RESPECT, WE HAVE BEEN COUNSELING RESTRAINT TO ISRAELIS WITH SOME SUCCESS. WE BELIEVE THEY WOULD SEE INTERVENTION OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES AS SO THREATENING, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD PROCEED TO INTERVENE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WHATEVER WE SAID -- A SITUATION WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY HOPE TO AVOID.

4. WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DISCUSS QUESTION ALONG ABOVE LINES WITH ASAD. WE RECOGNIZE KHADDAM MUST BE INCLUDED AND LEAVE TO YOU WHETHER TO SEE HIM FIRST OR JOINTLY WITH ASAD, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE IN MIND DESIRABILITY OF SEEING AT LEAST KHADDAM BEFORE ARAB FONMIN MEETING ON LEBANON, OCTOBER 15. SAY TO THEM THAT WE APPRECIATE RECENT SINAI AGREEMENT HAS RAISED PROBLEMS IN SYRIAN-U.S. RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE WOULD HOPE WE COULD SEPARATE OTHER AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST, SUCH AS LEBANON, FROM ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE. YOU SHOULD STRESS THAT WE INTEND THIS DIALOG AS SERIOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN US WHICH WE HOPE WILL ENABLE US TO PLAY USEFUL ROLE, TO EXTENT WE CAN, IN RESOLVING LEBANESE PROBLEM. WE HAVE NOTED EFFORTS OF SYRIANS, WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE HAD MODERATING AND CONSTRUCTIVE EFFECT ON SITUATION, AND WE WISH TO WORK WITH SYRIA TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. YOU WILL MAKE SURE NOT TO SAY ANYTHING THAT ASAD CAN CONSTRUE AS THREAT OR AS U.S.-ISRAELI COLLUSION.

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5. FOR BEIRUT: PLEASE TREAT AS SENSITIVE, FYI ONLY, FACT THAT WE DISCUSSING LEBANESE SITUATION WITH SYRIANS. END FYI. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE243490
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARDAY/MAR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750355-0428
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751059/aaaacacg.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 AUG 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <02 DEC 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DIALOG WITH SYRIA ON LEBANESE SITUATION FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, SY, US
To: DAMASCUS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006